Pam
Miss.

JAN 1 0 1946

1752

Missions In War

By

M. SEARLE BATES

Missionary to China

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2022 with funding from
Columbia University Libraries

https://archive.org/details/missionsinwar00bate

Missions In War

M. Searle Bates

I. THROUGHOUT HISTORY THE CHURCH HAS GONE FORWARD IN SPITE OF WAR.

1. The New Testament World Was a Soldiers' World.

The Church of Jesus Christ was born in the presence of the imperial legionnaires. Soldiers bulked so large in that society that part of the meager teaching of John the Baptist had been directed to them alone. Jesus healed the centurion's servant, and employed the officer as a natural and proper example of adequate faith. In the Gospel records, the climax of the life of Christ is approached with descriptions of armies in tumult against Jerusalem, "upon the earth distress of nations" (Luke 21:25). Soldiers were the agents of the Crucifixion, the immediate witnesses of the central experience of Christianity. When it had to be written of the disciples, "They all left him and fled," when Peter cursed and swore, "I know not the man", it was a centurion who declared, "Truly this man was the Son of God."

2. The Early and the Medieval Church Evangelized a Warring World.

The Apostles toiled and died in an advancing military Empire. From those days unto this, the Church has scarce known a year without the violence of armies, scarce a decade free from extended war. The centuries of struggle on the frontiers of Rome, the millenial conflicts of Teuton and Slav, the invasions of Hun and Mongul and Turk, the struggles of the Moslem advance and repulse in which the Crusades were mere episodes, the interminable fuedal strife of the Middle Ages, the perennial warfare of the Holy Roman Empire and its Germanic heirs: through them all

in bloodshed and in misery the Church went on with its preaching and teaching and worship, converting the Roman and the Greek, the Frank and the Teuton, the Briton and the Northman, the Slavs in their profusion, yea the offspring of the Vandal and Hun.

3. "The Light Shineth in the Darkness."

In the darkest centuries the Church's light was most precious: its faith in the God of Love and Truth; its never-extinguished reminder that sinful men require reconciliation with God and with each other; its eternal begetting of simple piety and good will; its flowering now and again in saints and in mighty leaders; its protection and reproduction of the Scriptures; its fostering of common language and common thought about the issues of life; its conservation of learning and beginnings in education; its lonely service of providing illiterate warrior-lords with intelligent administrators and judges; its development of law; its maintenance of industry and charity in monastic centers; its building for the centuries in strength and beauty; its interchange of priests and monks from land to land; its vision and practice of unity in Christendom. What are the present-day counterparts of these services of the Church? If the Holy Spirit thus labored in the rude men of the Dark and Feudal Ages, will He not work amid our violence?

4. The Protestant Movements Have Made Their Way Through Great Conflicts.

Luther and Calvin were called in an era of warfare; and the major settlement of Reformation was made at the close of the Thirty Years' War which destroyed a large part of the population of Germany. Knox and Wesley toiled through the "world wars" of their times. Our own Alexander Campbell and his colleagues in the westward spread of the American Churches were formed in the catastrophic era of Napoleon, which shook both India and North America as it ruined Europe. Moscow and Washington were burned; Paris, Berlin and Rome, all three shuddered beneath the tread of alien armies. Yet in those very years

Carey and Morrison went forth, as the churches of Britian and soon of America rallied to the age-long responsibility for sharing the Good News and the Good Life of Christ

5. Even the Nineteenth, the Great Century, Surrounded the Church with Violence.

The Nineteenth Century it now dimly remembered as an epoch of peace and security. Yet the Church had to maintain its life and develop its mission through our great Civil War, through violent recurring revolutions and wasting conflicts in all of Latin America, through several desperate struggles in the Balkans, through the revolutions and whole series of nationalist wars in France and Germany and Italy and Austria, through the terrible Taiping Rebellion in China, the Mutiny and the successive frontier wars in India, not to mention a score of lesser struggles. Yet those were the great days of Protestant pioneering and foundation-building among half the peoples of the earth, in most of Asia and Africa and Latin America and a hundred islands of the sea. We now take it utterly for granted that the Church of our grandfathers should have pushed steadily onward throughout and in spite of grievous wars. They were faithful to the heavenly vision.

II. TWO GREAT WARS IN OUR GENERATION STRIKE THE CHURCH AND ITS WORLD MISSION

1. The First World War Not Catastrophic, Nor the Church Greatly Heroic.

1914 brought the first world-wide war since the telegraph, the newspaper and general education have made it possible for whole peoples to respond sensitively to manifold crisis. The peace sentiment which had developed among the churches, especially in set-apart America, did not have much effect upon practical attitudes, even toward other Christians. The Continuation Committees of the Edinburgh Conference had provided by 1914 rudimentary organs for international contact among the

varied Protestant bodies. Yet institutional touch with the German churches was quickly broken. "Enemy" and neutral churches did much to maintain the work of the German missions in Asia and Africa, however, taking them over in an informal trusteeship as branches of the total Church of Christ. In difficult negotiations following the war, the work and the properties were fully restored to German hands. Meanwhile, the major areas of missionary concentration were not immediately involved in warfare and no "Protestant country" was devasted by the war. In this doubly good fortune, missions stood fairly well the strains of dislocated transportation, currencies and price levels. Extraordinary services rendered by missions and their personnel, such as the aid to Chinese labor corps in France out of which grew Jimmy Yen's Mass Education enterprises, compensated for minor difficulties in their ordinary programs.

2. Now in Totalitarian Perils, the World Character of the Church Is More Clearly Valued.

In the present conflict, the outlook for the Christian World Movement is both darker and brighter than in 1914. The Russian, the German and the Italian Governments have severely attacked and oppressed the Church within their borders. In the case of Germany, Protestantism and its missions are seriously affected, although there are some aspects of remarkable purification among the Christians of that nationality. Of especial bearing on the immediate subject is the fact that German missionary leaders have kept their contact with the International Missionary Council (the connecting link among some organizations in some forty countries concerned with sending or receiving missionaries.) Cut off from financial or other communication with their missionaries, the German leaders regard the International Council, through its centers in London and in New York, as representing them—a great gain since 1914. Moreover, other valuable connections with the German churches are maintained by the nascent World Council of Churches and the World's Christian Student Federation, both centered in Geneva. Thus many

a significant spirit is saved the consequences of complete break in the supra-national fellowship, and is kept in readiness for constructive fellowship in the coming crisis of international settlement and readjustment.

3. Courageous Outreach of the European Churches.

This time the blows and restrictions put upon the Danish, Norwegian, Dutch and French churches (Protestants, we mean), are a new factor of damage. They have been physically prevented from support of their missions by home churches. But the Government of the Netherlands East Indies has extensively aided the large missions in its territories; the Norwegian Government in exile has granted a generous fund for Norwegian missions abroad; and in a remarkable rally the grievously burdened French churches have recently been able to resume support of their important missions in Madagascar, as the head of their society comes forth from fourteen months in prison. Meanwhile the Danish Church has increased its annual gifts for missions, seeking the means and occasion for despatching them; and the home churches of the Netherlands are ordaining new missionaries for the day of freedom to take their normal part in the ongoing of World Christianity. These achievements, like those of the British, Swedish and Swiss churches, have been made in the face of economic loss and stringency beyond any American experience. They challenge the complacency and half-heartedness of many American Christians.

4. The Miracle of the Orphaned Missions.

It is to the Christian merit of the churches of North America, generously aided by those of Great Britian and of many other countries, that they have maintained the work of German and other continental missions by continued support of 120 Orphaned Missions, administered as one whole from the New York office of the International Missionary Council. Not one discovered need has gone unanswered, not one missionary is known to have ceased labor because of lack of support. Almost two million dollars have been contributed for this purpose. Great sac-

rifices in standard of living and in freedom of movement have been made by missionaries and their native associates, as their extraordinary contributions toward meeting the crisis. For routine example, a group of French missionaries in unhealthy portions of Africa are already two years past their furlough time, with peril to their strength and to their future service.

5. The Miracle Is a Testimony to Our Day and a Promise of Greater Things To Come.

By any Christian standard this work for the Orphaned Missions is a great advance. It is fully recognized that the work is God's and for His Kingdom, not for the political interest of any national group. The gratitude of the continental societies, and of the missionaries and their fellow-workers, is magnificently expressed; it is a glad earnest of deepened fellowship in freedom at the close of the war. Here is living evidence that the Christian bonds of God's family are indestructible by political requirements of whatever urgency. It is to the credit of the American and of the various British Governments concerned, that they have been willing to facilitate the transfer of missionary funds and personnel, even in the teeth of wartime controls over currencies and travel. They recognize that the Christian interests are deep and enduring, and should be hampered as little as possible by the general restrictions.

III. MISSIONS SEIZE THE DANGEROUS OPPORTUNITY

1. Danger Roams Far and Wide.

Danger and opportunity, twin challenge to the Christian, have lain in the devastation by war of important mission fields, and the radical involvement of others. The invasion of China has now continued four years and a half; and that of the Philippines, Malaya and the East Indies is in violent progress. Totalitarian pressure in one way or another has put missions out of action and the native churches on the spot in Japan (with Formosa, Korea, Manchuria), Thailand, and largely in Indo-China.

The East Indies and the Pacific islands, Burma and the Near East are imperilled; while India and some parts of Africa are anxious.

2. Yet the Outlook It Not Terrifying.

But a realistic view of danger and turmoil must be taken in proper perspective. In cold fact, the three great missionary fields of Latin America, Africa and India have not been significantly disturbed. Indeed, China is the only major field to be invaded; and that, with several areas of smaller effort, has been closed only in part. (Even since the internments following Pearl Harbor, there are well toward 2,000 missionaries, the majority of them not American, at work throughout the free regions of China.) Furthermore, we must always be clear that in any well-established field of Christian work, the native church is more important than missionary interests narrowly considered. Growth may be seriously retarded or warped by the temporary cessation of mission aid in personnel and in resources; but in most of the fields it will not fail, even as judged in human terms. And we of little faith are continually astonished by the deeds of the Spirit of God in the hearts of men who have heard and received the Good News.

3. Opportunity Transcends Danger

Other considerations press. As in all the dark and bloody centuries of man's warfare against man, human needs are deepened just where danger and disorder prevail. When human life and liberty are insecure, when misery and despair abound, man's need for faith and loving fellowship is greatest. Shall the Christian pass by on the other side? Shall the world be consigned by Christians to the Devil, until he makes it comfortable for us to resume work? That is not the faith that overcomes the world, but the unbelief of indifference, indolence and cowardice. Looking squarely at the multitudes bombed and confused, wounded and hungry, homeless and despairing, captive and oppressed, what do you preach and what do you practice in the World Mission of Christ? There were no rain-checks and no war-risk exemptions in the commandments of our Master. Beware of those who forge them, saying it is

unprofitable or it is inopportune to minister in wartime to other than our own communities.

4. China's Experience of Missions on a Vast Battlefield.

Rather it is among the glories of the Christian Church in our time, that missions did not simply fold up and quit when China was invaded, as so many of the worldly wise and the financially reluctant were quick to urge. With the active help of Christian folk in this and other lands, supplied and expressed through missionaries who shared the full experiences of Chinese Christians and of all the plain people as they passed through the valley of violence, the entire Christian enterprise rose to new levels of faith and love and service. A fourth of the Christian hospitals, more than half the schools, were put out of action by bombing and burning and the shocks of the invasion. Yet with inadequate staffs, with remnants of equipment, they were replaced in service amid continuing destruction and impoverishment. Many a town knew for months, even for years in its most abject need, only the Christian hospital and the Christian school. For all others failed.

5. Christians Multiply Their Service.

Crippled as they were, the Christian forces in China reached out to others more needy than themselves. Shelter and care for refugees numbered in the millions, relief enterprises aiding other millions in hunger and distress, the organization of many thousands of persons to care for China's three million wounded soldiers, all these represent uncounted days of devoted effort by tens of thousands of men and women ministering "unto the least of these my brethren." The myriad acts of mercy have been to the previously untouched and the skeptical a colossal demonstration of the Word. "Now we know what you have been talking about all the years," is the manifold saying of multitudes. The same acts have been a magnificent project of "religious education" for all who took part in them, Christians and non-Christians alike. Cooperative service and purposeful fellowship under Christian inspiration and leader-

ship, experienced through crises of bombardment and assault, through the greater, continuing damage of poverty and the dislocation of society, build character that can confront this present world.

6. Congregational Life Is Vigorously Renewed.

Scattered congregations restored, lost leaders replaced by earnest lay members, new life in the western centers that received the cream of the migration, and overwhelming eagerness of the young for spiritual direction and for conviction of The Way, these are the characteristics of the Chinese Church in its inner activities. Tens of thousands of students have thronged evangelistic meetings and Bible classes in universities and schools that before the war forbade any religious service or instruction upon their campuses. Well over 200,000 Bibles and Testaments are sold each year, with more than 4,000,000 Gospels and portions, even while there is no transportation to many regions, and while paper has risen to twenty and to forty times the old prices. During the war period, the total sales of the new union hymnal have reached 300,000, under similar difficulties. Such are the outreaches from a membership of Protestant communicants numbering only 600,000, almost all of whom are poor and some of whom cannot read. "Man's extremity is God's opportunity." This advance through slaughter and devastation is joy to those who have shared in it. Those who wilfully or indifferently stand aside are defrauding themselves as those whom they might help.

7. The Price Is Gladly Paid.

One may estimate that two to three hundred Chinese Christian workers have met death at their posts of duty. Twelve Protestant missionaries (and as many Catholics) have been killed by bombs or soldiers' bullets. Within a few months' time, three missionaries from the China colleges took their own lives in the collapse of nervous disease. But who has lost life and who has gained it in the total story of that Christian service in wartime? Would any sane person want to buy the prolonged physical existence of those three hundred comrades at the price of the

courage of the Christian effort in China? Let millions of refugees and starvelings, hundreds of thousands of wounded, hundreds of thousands of those who hunger and thirst in spirit, make answer. Christ's answer was given long ago, against these hours in China, and not less against the days of spiritual and bodily need in the other lands wrecked by war. The real dead are those who stifle in pettiness and selfishness. The real living are those who give themselves for their brethren.

IV. THE WORLD MISSION IS ESSENTIAL TO PEACE AND A NEW HUMANITY.

1. A New Earth Requires New Persons.

Wartime enhances the significance of missions for the New Heaven and for the New Earth. To build the Church in all lands, with its intimate part in the realization of God's Kingdom, is a task of more than human import, magnified in the midst of man's degradation. But it also has special meanings for the New Earth continually brought before us in glimpses lighted from the New Heaven. Who will plan now, on bases true and sure, but for a peace that opens the way to helpful association of the peoples embittered in war? Who is concerned for sound reconstruction of ally and enemy alike, to heal the wounds and restore the damaged circulation in the social body? Where will the world find the personnel who can be trusted, when dire need and suspicious hate are the twin foes of healthful recovery, to carry the burden of relief administration, to temper the rigor of bureaucrats to the sensitive spirits of the defeated and the war-weary, to strengthen the souls broken in disillusionment at the never-ending selfishness of men, to translate the general programs into more abundant life within the individual heart, the village home, the neighborhood church, the classroom and the clinic?

2. The Christian Church Must Supply the New Men.

Only persons devoted to the highest interests of life, above the divisive barriers of nation, race or class; persons experienced in the

remedial, constructive tasks; persons who possess the effective confidence and the working organizations both in the countries that can give and in the countries that can receive; persons who know the language, both literally and figuratively, that is required on the spot of the most difficult contacts and adjustments. The only large body of them is to be found among the Christian churches in their world-wide and missionary aspects. The most conspicuous of the secular organizations that works in these fields, the International Red Cross, draws its field agents largely from the Christian groups. And there are many tasks that require a greater continuity, depth or delicacy than the mass enterprises of the Red Cross can claim.

3. The Church Sets Its Mind to Peace.

The existent international ties of the Christian Church are precious in the midst of war. They represent the spiritual commitment of a great number of useful lives to a humanity above and beyond the battle. This commitment is nourished in faith and prayer, with enormous potentiality for good. Its vision of the kind of peace that can reduce the harm of war, that can snatch from the grim sacrifices men make for power and for liberty, some measure of justice and fair opportunity—that vision is being expressed in a wealth of thoughtful study and conference, of concrete counsel in London, Washington and other capitals.

4. We Christians Have Received the Ethic of Brotherhood. Are We Devoted to It?

If there is to be a friendly and mutually beneficial organization of the nations, rather than war unending or unity by conquest, it must rest upon a world ethic, a recognition that we are all of one blood, and that the standard of conduct and attitude which we recognize as right among Americans is also valid in our relations with other peoples. Christianity has that ethic, that Good News for a world that desperately needs it. The Christian churches possess in their missionary effort the experimental basis, the nucleus of personnel, the rudiments of education for

the moral foundation of a decent world society. When our churches show half the vigor in God's cause that the Hitler troopers and the Japanese devotees put forth in mighty effort for their New Orders, when we are half as willing to subject our lives and our means to the requirements of God as to the requirements of national defense, then we can see in the making a world prepared to use for human welfare the wealth and labor and life that now are doubly destroyed in destruction.

5. Missions and the Course of This War.

We cannot shrink from the present international struggle. Our part must be done if there is to be even a chance of a livable world. But in the victory necessary for mankind, we must have held fast to the good, not have let it slip. In the war and after the war, our Christian ties with other peoples need strengthening in love and mercy. We seek in every land Christian men, whose spirit and ethic we share, with whom we may join in the eternal fellowship of good will and good works. Of such fellowship is the Kingdom of Heaven, and a fairer earth.

Miner Searle Bates is a missionary of The United Christian Missionary Society, serving as professor of history in the University of Nanking, China. He is recognized as an authority and interpreter of Far East affairs. He is now in the United States assisting the International Missionary Council and the Foreign Missions Conference of North America with headquarters in New York City.

THE UNITED CHRISTIAN MISSIONARY SOCIETY
222 Downey Avenue Indianapolis, Indiana

Printed in U. S. A.